

M. E. BRADFORD

M. E. Bradford (1934-1993), who was a contributor to the Sewanee Review for thirty years, began writing for this magazine while he was completing his graduate work at Vanderbilt University. Best known here and elsewhere for his criticism on Faulkner, Professor Bradford also wrote in these pages on such varied topics as the literature of travel, Sir Walter Scott, English lyric poetry, and contemporary fiction. At his death he was completing an essay-review for the SR devoted to new studies of western American fiction and culture. He leaves behind many books on American culture (literature, history, politics); his wife of thirty-five years and their son; and a legion of devoted friends who come from greatly diverse walks of life—the U.S. Navy, the academy, party politics, many other amateur and professional groups (especially in the American West and South), and the Republic of Letters. —Ed.

The huge form of M. E. Bradford, surmounted by a great broad-brimmed stetson, will be seen no more this side of eternity. Some personalities are so strong that one cannot imagine their extinction, and so it is with Mel Bradford. Quite as he refused to be swallowed up by Leviathan, the total state, so he may be expected to reject absorption into some amorphous World-Soul. Father Martin D'Arcy used to say that Heaven is a state of being in which all the good things of one's earthly existence are forever present to the soul—not in memory merely, but in their original fullness—whenever the soul desires them; while in the state of being called Hell, all the evils of one's temporal existence are eternally present, inescapably. God willing, then, the long-enduring friendship between Bradford and me will survive the tooth of Cronos, Time the Devourer.

No writer of our generation was more genuinely southern than Dr. Bradford, the disciple and biographer of Donald Davidson. (One trusts that someone very competent will complete the writing of Davidson's life, upon which Mel had been working sporadically for two decades.) For him (and I agree) the Civil War inflicted upon the American people tribulations from which they never have recovered. For my part I am a northerner of northerners, born twenty-five miles from the Canadian border, the descendant of ancestors who enlisted in the Army of the Republic at Lincoln's call for volunteers.

Yet Mel Bradford and this writer found themselves at one in their political and literary principles: the two of us endeavored to uphold the Permanent Things. Bradford quoted and cited me in his books and speeches; I was his most ardent adherent in his endeavor to be appointed chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a post in which he might have accomplished much good; he was defeated by Manhattanites, a breed as much detested by Bradford as by Donald Davidson.

"They will never love where they ought to love," said Edmund Burke, "who do not hate where they ought to hate." A lover of great literature

and of the politics of prescription, Bradford was a good hater, too. He especially detested Abraham Lincoln, denouncing in essay upon essay Lincoln's character and policies. Our friend Richard Weaver, descendant of Mountain Whigs, inordinately venerated Lincoln; on that question I steered a middle course. In his last year Bradford relented somewhat. I have been preparing for publication in the Library of Conservative Thought a new edition of his book *A Better Guide Than Reason: Studies in the American Revolution*—a work of exhaustive scholarship. A few months before his death, he asked me to delete from one chapter certain phrases of his disagreeing with me in my assessment of Lincoln. "I do not now perceive that our differences in opinion on Lincoln amount to much," he wrote to me, "and have come to agree with you that he is best understood with reference to mere politics—at least until the pain of his war time role made him imagine that he was privy to God's will."

As historian, theoretical and practical politician, rhetorician, and critic of humane letters, Bradford was very much a man of mark. As a friend there was none quite like him; until I too am lapped in lead, his goodnatured infectious chuckle will echo in my ears.

—Russell Kirk